

Food Industry Sustainability

Sustainable and environmentally responsible practices are becoming part of the daily business process across the industry as restaurant owners understand that waste reduction, energy efficiency, water conservation, and recycling are beneficial for their business and their community.

The National Restaurant Association, with support from Georgia-Pacific Professional, conducted a survey of the restaurant industry's recycling practices. The results provide an understanding of the current recycling practices of restaurants, in addition to measuring consumer demands and perceptions. The survey found that most restaurant owners support recycling and 85% of their patrons are willing to sort recyclables into bins.

Recycling has become business as usual for 65% of restaurant operators. Approximately 74% of operators stated that they use a back-room recycling program and 43% indicated they recycle in the front of their business. About 60% of customers said they prefer to support restaurants that recycle, with 51% saying they are willing to pay an average of 10% more at restaurants that do recycle.

The National Restaurant Association is leading the way to voluntary, industry-driven solutions that increase affordable and sustainable packaging options and expand community recycling organizations. Smart packaging can reduce both packaging waste and food waste. The Association,

and the Foodservice Packaging Institute, organized the Executive Foodservice Packaging Summit to initiate innovations in industry-wide packaging solutions.

Reducing food waste is the goal of The Food Waste Reduction Alliance, a partnership between the National Restaurant Association, the Grocery Manufacturers Association, and the Food Marketing Institute. The Alliance is working toward more efficient food donations, better use of product, and increasing restaurant waste composting. About 13% of restaurants currently participate in composting programs. Another alliance, between the National Restaurant Association and the U.S. Composting Council, promotes composting through awareness and education.

ConServe is the National Restaurant Association's broad-based initiative that is helping operators to initiate sustainable practices that are good for the environment and reduce their costs. ConServe is a concept leader, industry partner, best practice resource, and reporter of industry success stories. The program collects and transmits sustainable solutions that restaurants implement to protect the environment. ConServe focuses on energy efficiency, water conservation, waste reduction, resource management, and construction efficiency. Restaurant owners can rely on ConServe for practical advice, recommendations, and resources that reduce their costs and strengthen their profits.



ConServe has become the restaurant industry's one-stop shop for sustainable solutions.

ConServe Sustainability Education Program is an online resource that provides participating restaurant operators with a customized plan to reducing their energy usage, waste, and water consumption. The program is tailored to each operator's restaurant concept and includes checklists, industry-tested sustainable practices, and videos.

ConServe partners with other organizations, including the Food Service Technology Center, Zero Waste Zones, and EPA Energy Star to progress the field of conservation across the restaurant industry. These partnerships have led to the Sustainable Food Court Initiative for sustainable practices in multi-tenant conditions, best practices for achieving zero waste, and valuable research on sustainable restaurant practices. The results of these accomplishments are benefitting corporations, private restaurateurs, and their communities as a whole.